

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CU-02 DHA-02 MCT-01
AID-05 PC-01 USSS-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 SCA-01
OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
OC-06 CCO-00 /109 W
-----044779 021512Z /46

R 020600Z AUG 77
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6500
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY GABORONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 2006

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SF
SUBJECT: SOWETO STUDENTS AND POLICE FENCE
WHILE COMMITTEE OF TEN WAITS

REF: JOHANNESBURG 1975

1. SUMMARY: SOWETO SUFFERED A WEEKEND OF SPORADIC VIOLENCE
ALTHOUGH POLICE OFFICIALS SUCCEEDED IN HAVING COMMITTEE OF
TEN MEETING BANNED. SOWETO WAS SOMETHING OF ARMED CAMI AS
RIOT POLICE REINFORCEMENTS WERE TRUCKED IN AND RIOT POLICE
CHIEF KRIEL AND SECURITY POLICE CHIEF ZIETSMAN CAME IN FROM
PRETORIA. SOWETO POLICE COMMANDER JAN VISSER WAS RECALLED
FROM LEAVE (AT LEAST TEMPORARILY) AS WORD SPREAD THAT POLICE
WERE GOING TO BE TAKING HARDER LINE. A FEW BLACKS, APPARENTLY
NOT HEARING OF BAN ON COMMITTEE OF TEN MEETING, APPEARED ON
SUNDAY AT CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL BUT WERE TOLD MEETING HAD BEEN
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RESCHEDULED FOR NEXT SUNDAY (AUGUST 7) AT 1400. END SUMMARY.

2. BY ALL ACCOUNTS, SOWETO WAS IN CONSTANT TURMOIL OVER PAST
WEEKEND AS STUDENTS REACTED BITTERLY TO HEAVY POLICE PATROLS
AND FREQUENT USE OF DOGS AND GUNFIRE IN THE AIR TO BREAK UP
CONCENTRATIONS OF YOUTHS. FRIDAY AFTERNOON SAW A GIRL STUDENT
KILLED BY AN ERRANT POLICE BULLET, AND THIS INCIDENT SEEMED

TO SET MOOD FOR WEEKEND AS STUDENTS ATTACKED CARS AND BUSES WITH STONES. TRUCKS WERE LOOTED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ALTHOUGH CONCENTRATION OF RIOT POLICE RIVALED THAT OF LAST JUNE 16.

3. BRIAGADIER JAN VISSER WAS RECALLED FROM LEAVE AND RIOT POLICE CHIEF KRIEL AND YECURITY POOLICE CHIEF ZIETSMAN WERE BROUGHT IN FROM PRETORIA TO DEAL WITH GROWING MOOD OF VIOLENCE IN SOWETO. POLICE TACTICS, PARTICULARLY THE RENEWED USE OF GUNFIRE OVER LAST WEEK AS WELL AS THE USE OF DOGS, HAVE INCREASEDO THE HOSTILITY TOWARD POLICE WHICH VISSER HAD SUCCEDED SOMEWHAT IN DAMPENING. HARDER POLICE LINE WAS EVIDENT IN THEIR PREVENTING STUDENTS AND ALL OTHERS EXCEPT FAMILY FROM ATTENDING THE FUNERAL OF DETAINEE WHO DIED IN POLICE CUSTODY EARLY IN JULY.

4. THE COMMITTEE OF TEN MEETING, PERHAPS PRUDENTLY BANNED BY THE POLICE IN LIGHT OF THE PRESENT TENSION, HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR NEXT SUNDAY (AUGUST 7) AT 1400. COMMITTEE OF TEN IS TRYING TO KEEP POLICE-STUDENT CONFRONTATION FROM BREAKING INTO OPEN WARFARE. IN THIS REGARD, COMMITTEE OF TEN TOOK A CONCILIATORY LINE TOWARD BANNING ORDER AND MADE NO ATTEMPT TO CONTRAVENE IT.

5. COMMENT: COMMITTEE OF TEN HAS TAKEN VERY MODERATE STAND OVER THE PAST WEEK DESPITE THE FIGHTING GOING ON AROUND IT BETWEEN POLICE AND SOWETO YOUTH. COMMITTEE IS GAINING INCREASING SUPPORT IN THE WHITE COMMUNITY AS EVEN AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPER CONFIDENTIAL

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DIE TRANSVALER EDITORIALIZED IN FAVOR GIVING IT A HEARING. COMMITTEE BELIEVES ITS CHANCES OF OVERCOMING INITIAL NATIONALIST REJECTION ARE IMPROVING AND WANTS TO MAINTAIN MODERATE POSTURE IN HOPES OF MINIMIZING INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION. JOHNSONO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, STUDENTS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977JOHANN02006
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770276-0645
Format: TEL
From: JOHANNESBURG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197708107/aaaadnbz.tel
Line Count: 99
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0ce99e4f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 JOHANNESBURG 1975
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1421915
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOWETO STUDENTS AND POLICE FENCE WHILE COMMITTEE OF TEN WAITS
TAGS: PINS, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0ce99e4f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009